



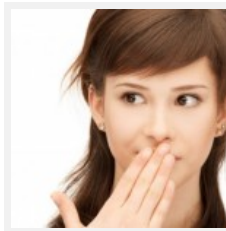
Cheryl Conner, Contributor

I write about communications, business and the ways the two intersect

ENTREPRENEURS | 11/17/2012 @ 9:30PM | 46,080 views

10 Things You Should Never Say To Your Boss

I love the things [Jenna Goudreau](#) said in last week's article about the [10 Worst Communication Mistakes for your career](#) – particularly her notes about what it takes to be viewed as a leader. As Jenna notes, it requires “[executive presence](#),” which includes having gravitas, excellent communication skills and a polished appearance.



Oops!

While avoiding swearing, racial comments, flirting and off color jokes would seem fairly obvious, Jenna's points about “sounding uneducated” and “rambling” are especially astute. But I'd like to take the subject a step further with my own list of leadership-limiting gaffes. Here goes:

1. **The Ego.** “I can't let (Oscar) get his way.” Interesting. What does Oscar want? Can he make a business case for it? Is his suggestion the best means to that end? That's the only thing the boss wants to hear. Anything else will leave him or her far more disenchanted with the complainer than with the individual they're trying to impugn. A career minded executive will ignore the issue of who “won or lost” points in a business suggestion, or will discuss their irritations directly with the other person involved.
2. **The Temper.** Here's another no-brainer. It's amazing how many seemingly smart executives and even bosses continue to miss this obvious wisdom. Anything said in the heat of emotion expresses far more about the shouter's maturity level than it does about their target of wrath. Emphatic is good. A spirited discussion can be extremely productive. But if a dialogue can't happen in a spirit of productivity, you're better off to hold off until you're sure that it can.
3. **The Lack of Core Integrity Values,** or, even worse, the attempt to assign nobility to ignoble acts. “I cannot speak an untruth. This was my vision and my program. My integrity requires that I tell my truth to the world.” Really? Recognizing the other parties in a success would constitute a moral untruth? Hmmmm. Relishing the failures of others, spreading gossip, sharing confidential information, or laying traps to ensnare a professional enemy would fall into this bucket as well.
4. **The Threat.** “I turned down an offer of (\$XXX) just last week. I was an inch away from accepting, but no, I chose to stay here.” Wow. Seeking outside offers during employment may be interesting as a way to see where you stand in the open market now and again, but to lay this conversation down in front of your boss is playing with fire. It is never, ever, the pronouncement to throw down in the heat of negotiation unless you are prepared and ready to leave. Your employer will see you as an individual with one foot out the door as opposed someone whose loyalty and reliability would make a good long-term and promotable bet.
5. **The Territory Grab.** “I was here first. You should promote from within.” “I don't see what Jerry ever did to deserve that promotion.” While promoting from within should always be a first consideration, “I was here first” is the worst possible justification for a promotion or raise. Do you feel you are producing the revenue or new business to justify a promotion or a raise? That is the time to raise

the discussion. What do you propose to bring to the table that will allow the business to grow? What did “Jerry” bring to the table that the business or department was lacking? Yes, the individual has shortcomings. Yes, the boss is aware. Perhaps a conversation to ask the boss what they saw and valued in the individual would be highly informative. Taking the time to see what the individual brings that the boss determined was needed will be far more productive than being passive aggressive to the individual, pleading that you should have been given the role because you were “there first,” or trying to illustrate for the boss the other person’s shortcomings or faults.

6. **The Obstacle.** “Their meetings are disorganized.” Yes, they are. So how do you intend to address it? Bring a solution and a plan of action forward. Using an obstacle as an excuse, or throwing it in your boss’s lap as a concern to resolve, is akin to throwing up a beacon that illustrates to the world you are unable or unwilling to perform in your job. As we say in the consulting business, you should strive to be the aspirin, not the source of the headache, when it comes to the observations and complaints you choose to bring to your boss.
7. **The Accusation.** “Our customers aren’t on annual contracts.” (Accusing tone of voice for additional flair.) And your point is what? Do you think your boss was not aware of this fact? Pointing out hard facts, especially accusingly, is not helpful to your company and even less to your desire to advance your career. What is your proposal for why and how the current procedure should change? That would be a welcome conversation, and a valuable insight to share.
8. **The Responsibility Shift.** “I’m not happy here.” Ever heard of “karma?” Rule #1: You are responsible for your own happiness, and you are equally responsible for any lacking thereof. It’s not your boss’s job to make you happy. Letting your boss know what you need and want to BE happy—and the business rationale for granting your wishes—would be a much wiser plan.
9. **The Loose Cannon.** “I’m a Director (Vice President, Partner, Manager, etc.) I don’t need anybody’s permission to act.” Um, maybe not—but will your decision to act create an avalanche of after affects for the business or for somebody else? If a correlation of effort could avoid a catastrophe, it’s worth the extra step, no matter what your level of authority may be.
10. **The Child.** “Yeah, I know I haven’t been performing my job very well. But I’ve been here for an entire year and nobody’s offered me a raise. So where’s my incentive?” Emotional immaturity of any kind is an immediate red flag.

If you see yourself in any of these phrases, perhaps some career development is in order (if you are fortunate enough to still have your job). If you are a boss, however, you are probably also to blame – how are you managing and leading, and what is the process you are using to select the people you hire? Among the resources you may want to consider, **Alan E. Hall**, fellow *Forbes* contributor and the founder of **Grow America** has written an excellent eBook, “*The 7 C’s: How to Find and Hire Great People*,” that you can find on **Amazon** or at www.AlanEHall.com.

In any case, while the examples I’ve shared are extreme enough to be humorous, they are all too frequent and real. Is it the employee or the manager who is more at fault when these statements happen? What are the worst career-limiting statements you’ve heard? Feel free to share your additions to this list in the comments section below.

Editor’s Note: [Alan Hall](#) will publish a response to this column next week, “*The 10 Things a Boss Should Never Say to an Employee.*” What should he include? You can reach him here or via [@AskAlanEHall](#).

Author: [Cheryl Conner](#) | [Google+](#)

This article is available online at:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylsnappconner/2012/11/17/10-things-you-should-never-say-to-your-boss/>

